

25th September 2023

Dear _____,

ATISN 18744 – Staff Name

Information requested

Thank you for your request which I received on 16th August 2023. You asked for the name of the Deputy Director of the Welsh Government Equality and Human Rights Division.

Our response

I have decided that your request for this information is exempt from disclosure of Section 40(2) Freedom of Information Act and is therefore withheld. The reasons for applying these exemptions are set out in full at Annex A to this letter.

Next steps

If you are dissatisfied with the Welsh Government's handling of your request, you can ask for an internal review within 40 working days of the date of this response. Requests for an internal review should be addressed to the Welsh Government's Freedom of Information Officer at:

Information Rights Unit,
Welsh Government,
Cathays Park,
Cardiff,
CF10 3NQ

or Email: Freedom.ofinformation@gov.wales

Please remember to quote the ATISN reference number above.

You also have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office,
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane,
Wilmslow,
Cheshire,
SK9 5AF.

However, please note that the Commissioner will not normally investigate a complaint until it has been through our own internal review process.

Annex A

Application of exemptions/exceptions

The Freedom of information Act/Environmental Information Regulations provide a right for anyone to ask a public authority to make requested information available to the wider public. As the release of requested information is to the world, not just the requester, public authorities need to consider the effects of making the information freely available to everybody. Any personal interest the requester has for accessing the information cannot override those wider considerations.

I have decided to withhold the name of the Deputy Director of the Welsh Government Equality and Human Rights Division.

Freedom of Information Act 2000: Section 40(2)

Section 40(2) together with the conditions in section 40(3)(a)(i) or 40(3)(b) provides an absolute exemption if disclosure of the personal data would breach any of the data protection principles.

‘Personal data’ is defined in sections 3(2) and (3) of the Data Protection Act 1998 (‘the DPA 2018’) and means any information relating to an identified or identifiable living individual. An identifiable living individual is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of the individual.

We have concluded that, in this instance, the information requested contains third party personal data.

Under Section 40(2) of the FOIA, personal data is exempt from release if disclosure would breach one of the data protection principles set out in Article 5 of the GDPR. We consider the principle being most relevant in this instance as being the first. This states that personal data must be:

“processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner in relation to the data subject”

The lawful basis that is most relevant in relation to a request for information under the FOIA is Article 6(1)(f). This states:

“processing is necessary for the purposes of the legitimate interests pursued by the controller or by a third party except where such interests are overridden by the interests or fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject which require protection of personal data, in particular where the data subject is a child”.

In considering the application of Article 6(1)(f) in the context of a request for information under FOIA it is necessary to consider the following three-part test:-

- **The Legitimate interest test:** Whether a legitimate interest is being pursued in the request for information;
- **The Necessity test:** Whether disclosure of the information/confirmation or denial that it is held is necessary to meet the legitimate interest in question;
- **The Balancing test:** Whether the above interests override the interests, fundamental rights and freedoms of the data subject.

Our consideration of these tests is set out below:

1. Legitimate interests

We have been unable to identify any legitimate interest that would be met by release of the Deputy Director's identity. Civil servants are tasked to impartially support and implement the decisions of the government, as such disclosure would not provide or improve accountability or transparency of the work of the Welsh Government.

2. Is disclosure necessary?

We are unable to identify any reason as to why disclosure would be necessary for any legitimate purposes. It is not necessary for the Deputy Director's name to be made public for individuals to communicate with the Welsh Government on matters that fall within the remit of the Deputy Director. The identity would not lead to a greater understanding of any issues or how civil servants work to implement the policy decisions of ministers.

3. The balance between legitimate interests and the data subject's interests or fundamental rights and freedoms

We have been unable to identify any legitimate interest in favour of disclosure of the identity of the Deputy Director, nor do we believe disclosure is necessary. Consequentially, we believe that releasing this information would breach the fundamental rights and privileges provided by the GDPRs and DPA 2018, and as such this information is exempt from disclosure.